

**19 Reuss Federal Plaza**, 310 W. Wisconsin Ave. (1983) Architect: Perkins & Will, Chicago. Built by the private Carley Capital Group for rental to the U.S. government, the new Federal Building was designed by Chicago architects Perkins & Will with two 14-story wings joined by an interior atrium. The east wing features a series of angled setback walls that make room for a corner plaza with sculpture and plantings. Its bright Milk-of-Magnesia-bottle blue color has been the subject of local controversy since its completion in 1983. The building was named in honor of U.S. Representative Henry Reuss, who was instrumental in initiating the project.

**20 Hotel Wisconsin**, 714 N. Old World 3rd St. (1912-13) Architect: Holabird & Roche, Chicago. Milwaukee's first skyscraper hotel, the 12-story, 500-room Hotel Wisconsin was touted as the largest, newest and most modern hostelry in the State of Wisconsin at the time of its completion in 1913. The million dollar structure, part of the Schroeder Hotel chain, has a colorful and architecturally unique exterior. This northern German Renaissance Revival style building features bracketed gables, patterned red and white brickwork, and buff terra cotta trim.

**21 The Grand Avenue**, Wisconsin Ave. between the Milwaukee River and N. 4th Street (1982). The Grand Avenue Mall was one of downtown Milwaukee's most significant development projects of the 1980s. Six existing historic buildings along four blocks of Wisconsin Ave. were linked with a dramatic skylit Galleria and skywalks to create a continuous complex of shops and restaurants. This successful venture was the result of a unique public-private partnership, and took its name from the old name of West Wisconsin Avenue. The mall opened in 1982 and spurred a retail renaissance in the Central Business District. The major historic buildings that comprise the Grand Avenue are described below.

**Boston Store**, 331 W. Wisconsin Ave., (1895) Architect: Frank W. Bugbee; (1911) Henry C. Koch & Co.; 1920. Boston Store, the west anchor of the Grand Avenue, is Milwaukee's sole remaining home-town department store. Founded by Julius Simon in 1897, the business moved to the present site in 1900 and gradually expanded south to Michigan Street. A \$17 million renovation of the Boston Store was completed in 1990 and includes a dramatic new 4-story atrium space.

**Matthews Brothers Building / Woolworth's**, 301 W. Wisconsin Ave. (1891-92) Architect: Ferry & Clas. Matthews Brothers Manufacturing Co. was a nationally renowned woodworking firm whose customers included beer baron Frederick Pabst and auto baron Henry Ford. Matthews Bros.' Romanesque Revival building features a terra cotta cartouche with the letter "M" and spandrels with delicate putti. For many decades this building housed Woolworth's dime store but it was closed in 1994.

**Majestic Building / First Bank Building**, 231 W. Wisconsin Ave. (1907) Architect: Kirchhoff & Rose. The Schlitz Brewing Co. erected this 14-story structure to house offices and showcase the Majestic, once the second largest vaudeville theater downtown. The Majestic closed in 1932, and its space was made into offices. This Beaux Arts influenced Neoclassical structure features white porcelain brick and glazed terra cotta.

**22 Warner Building / Grand I And II**, 212 W. Wisconsin Ave. (1930-31) Architect: C. W. & George L. Rapp, Chicago. This combination office structure and movie palace was built by Warner Brothers Theaters Inc. as part of their nationwide chain of theaters, and it was the last of the great motion picture palaces to be built downtown. The breathtaking 3-story theater lobby is a dazzling jewel box of silvered and gilded Deco ornament and contrasts with the French Renaissance style auditorium. Famed New York artist Richard Haas painted the convincing tromp l'oeil mural on the building's blank east elevation in 1981.

**23 John Plankinton Building / Plankinton Arcade**, 161 W. Wisconsin Ave. (1915-16, 1925-26) Architect: Holabird & Roche, Chicago. Anticipating the suburban shopping mall by decades, the Plankinton Arcade was built by Plankinton heirs as a 2-story enclosed shopping arcade on the site of the family's famous 19th century hotel. Five floors of offices were added in 1925 at a cost of \$1 million. The interior contains a spectacular Neo-gothic style 2-story skylit atrium ringed with two levels of retail shops that was restored in 1980-1982 in conjunction with the Grand Avenue Mall's development.



**Above: West Wisconsin Avenue looking West from Milwaukee River c. 1950's.**  
**Front cover: Wisconsin Avenue looking East from 7th Street c. mid-1930's.**  
(Courtesy Milwaukee County Historical Society)

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**Avenues West**  
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**Juneautown: The Heart of Old Milwaukee**

**Juneautown: Preservation, Revitalization and Adaptive Reuse**

**North Point Neighborhood**

**Walker's Point: Residential Tour**

**Walker's Point: Commercial and Industrial Buildings Tour**

**West End**

**Yankee Hill**

### Key to symbols:

**NR National Register of Historic Places**

**ML Milwaukee Landmark**

**HPC Designated by the Historic Preservation Commission of Milwaukee, successor to the Milwaukee Landmarks Commission**

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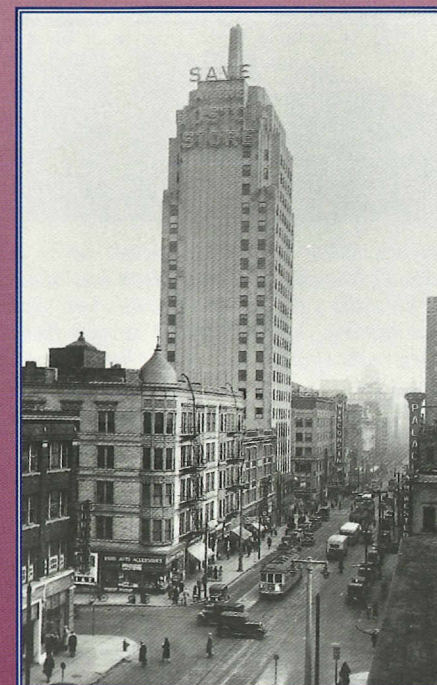
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# Milwaukee Historic Buildings Tour Kilbourn town

A self-guided  
walking tour  
of historic  
buildings  
in the  
Kilbourn  
neighborhood



## Kilbourntown Tour

Engineer, surveyor and land speculator Byron Kilbourn gave his name to the settlement on the west side of the Milwaukee River known as Kilbourntown. Recognizing the development potential of this area when he surveyed the region in the early 1830s, Kilbourn ultimately purchased 300 acres and platted his town in 1835. Like Juneau, across the river, Kilbourn followed the gridiron plan and laid out his town in repetitive rectangular blocks with major streets oriented east-west and north-south. The one exception to the grid is Plankinton Avenue, which follows the course of the Milwaukee River south from Third Street. Several randomly placed public squares and market areas were also originally included in the plat. Kilbourn, however, viewed his community as the rival of Juneautown and, in order to discourage the construction of bridges and the consolidation of his and Juneau's settlements, he did not align his east-west streets with those of Juneautown. Today's bridges, which are set at an angle between the east and west sides of the Milwaukee River, are a legacy of this pioneer rivalry.

The small Kilbourntown community started at the intersection of today's Old World Third Street and Juneau Avenue, the only high ground on Kilbourn's swampy tract of rice and tamarack marshes. This location was an important transportation crossroads, linking the settlement to Green Bay via 3rd Street and to Wauwatosa and Madison via Juneau Avenue and Vliet Street. The community's first link to Juneautown, a bridge built across the Milwaukee River in 1840, was also located here, and the first brick, commercial block was erected here in that same year by John Hustis. A bustling community soon spread west and south of this intersection, mingling stores, residences, churches, and tradesmen's shops. Although settled initially by Yankees, this location soon became the commercial hub of Milwaukee's German-American community, after Germans started arriving in Milwaukee in the late 1830s.

Once the riverside marshes and low lying swamps were filled in south of Juneau Avenue, retail and commercial activity in Kilbourntown became centered on West Wisconsin Avenue. This thoroughfare, originally known as Spring Street and later as Grand Avenue, began to assume importance in 1867 when meatpacker John Plankinton built the luxurious Plankinton House Hotel on the block between Plankinton Avenue and Second Street. From the late 1880s into the early 1900s, burgeoning department stores such as Gimbel's and the Boston Store, theaters, beer gardens, commercial blocks, and the main Public Library and Museum were built on the Avenue. Its proximity to the Milwaukee Road railroad depot also fostered the construction of numerous hotels around Wisconsin Avenue. The western part of Wisconsin Avenue developed into a luxurious residential area.

While a few 19th century buildings remain clustered in the Germania Triangle area and along Old World Third Street or as individual buildings scattered throughout the area, Kilbourntown today is chiefly a district of 20th century buildings. Commercial development and large scale urban redevelopment projects have taken their toll on the 19th century building stock. The Civic Center project was one of the largest of these projects. Planned in 1909 and executed in the 1920s, the Civic Center Plan proposed linking City Hall in Juneautown with a new courthouse on the prominent hill at 9th Street in Kilbourntown by way of a grand boulevard, Kilbourn Avenue, which would be flanked by public and governmental buildings. Kilbourn Avenue was subsequently widened from the lakeshore west to 9th Street, and the Kilbourn Avenue bridge was built where no bridge had existed before. The new County Courthouse and Safety Building were constructed at the west end of the new boulevard. Hundreds of houses, apartment buildings, and commercial blocks were razed in the process. Construction of such large scale buildings as MECCA, the Arena, the Bradley Center, and the Grand Avenue Mall projects further reduced the number of surviving Victorian buildings. Freeway construction and related activities resulted in the destruction of most of the buildings on once-teeming Juneau Avenue, the place where Kilbourntown began. Kilbourntown today remains Milwaukee's center of major retail and indoor recreational and exhibition activities.



**1 Gimbel's / Marshall Field's Building**, 101 W. Wisconsin Ave. (1901-02) Architect: Daniel H. Burnham & Co., Chicago; (1923-25) Herman J. Esser, Milwaukee. Gimbel's was a name synonymous with good retail value in Milwaukee for nearly 100 years. Founded in Vincennes, Indiana in 1842 by Adam Gimbel, the business relocated here in 1887 and became a retail giant before opening stores in Philadelphia (1894) and New York City (1910). Always located in this block, the present building is actually a consolidation of six structures. The impressive columned riverfront portion was completed in 1925 and reportedly was based on Selfridge's Department Store in London. Gimbel's closed its midwest stores in 1986, and Marshall Field's acquired the downtown building.

**2 Empire Building / Riverside Theater**, 710 N. Plankinton Ave. and 116 W. Wisconsin Ave. (1927) Architect: Kirchhoff & Rose. For over a century an Empire Building has stood on this corner. The current 14-story Mediterranean Revival structure replaced an old Victorian towered and crenelated landmark in 1927, and now showcases the Riverside Theater, Milwaukee's last great vaudeville showhouse. The 2,557-seat theater was one of eight major theaters to operate in Kilbourn town's theater district, and it also featured motion pictures. Since its 1984 restoration, the Riverside has featured live entertainment.

**3 Germania Building**, 135 W. Wells St. (1896) Architect: Schnetzky & Liebert. NR. This monumental 8-story structure was the center of George Brumder's nationwide, German-language publishing empire. Begun in 1873, the firm published books, newspapers and magazines in the German language, and also published for the Wisconsin Lutheran Synod. Two carved lions sit above the entrance to this Classical Revival style building, and winged cherubs flank the building's date stone in the topmost pediment. The distinctive copper-clad domes with finials have been nicknamed "Kaiser's Helmets."

The pleasant triangle in front of the Germania and the buildings fronting it are part of the Plankinton/Wells/Water Street Historic District. Many of these buildings were occupied by furniture stores in this century and created something of a home furnishings center here.

**4 Second Ward Savings Bank / Milwaukee County Historical Center**, 910 N. Old World 3rd St. (1911-13) Architect: Kirchhoff & Rose. NR, ML, HPC. Nicknamed the Brewers Bank, the Second Ward Savings Bank was established in 1856 and had as directors such brewing industry heavyweights as beer barons Joseph Schlitz, Valentine Blatz, and Captain Frederick Pabst. The Beaux Arts French Classical Revival style structure features monumental stone columns, French Baroque style windows, and a rooftop balustrade. Since 1965 the building has served as the headquarters of the Milwaukee County Historical Society.

**5 Pere Marquette Park**. Planned in the 1960s to enhance the setting of the Performing Arts Center across the river, Pere Marquette park replaced a row of Victorian storefronts in 1973 and was extended west in 1975 after Plankinton Ave. was vacated between Kilbourn and State Sts. This 1.9-acre site commemorates the 1674 campsite of French Jesuit Missionary Pere Jacques Marquette, who, with Pierre Porteret and Jacques Largillier, explored Wisconsin. Sculptor Tom Queaff prepared the bronze cast of the statue of Father Marquette which stands in the park as a replica of an earlier, damaged marble sculpture.

**6 Old World 3rd Street**. NR, HPC. For six blocks north of Wisconsin Ave., 3rd St. has been designated as Old World 3rd Street in honor of its historic character. The grouping of buildings in the 1000 and 1100 blocks are the last remnants of a thriving commercial district that formed the hub of German-American commerce in Milwaukee. Today's Italianate, Victorian Gothic, and Romanesque Revival buildings replaced earlier frame ones and housed a host of retailers, wholesalers and manufacturers. Four buildings typify the German presence on the street. The Classical Revival building at No. 1030 houses Usinger's, now in its fourth generation of sausage making. The striking Romanesque style, red brick building at No. 1048 originally housed the business of William Steinmeyer, once the city's largest wholesale-grocery. In 1915 Charles Mader opened his restaurant at No. 1037-41. Subsequent remodelings have transformed the original 1-story storefront to its present Bavarian appearance. The distinctive stone-fronted, Victorian Gothic building at No. 1103 was built by John Lipps in 1878 and leased to numerous tenants including fraternal groups and the Boston Store.



**7 Bradley Center**, 1001 N. 4th St. (1986-88), Architects: Hellmuth, Obata & Kassabaum Inc., Kansas City, MO; Venture Architects, Milwaukee (Kahler Slater Torphy Architects; and Zimmerman Design Group). This Carnelian granite behemoth is Milwaukee's newest sports facility, donated to the city by prominent philanthropists Jane and Lloyd Pettit. It was named after Jane's father Harry Lynde Bradley, founder of the Allen-Bradley Co. The new home of the Bucks basketball team weighs about as much as the aircraft carrier U.S.S. Enterprise. The front atrium space with its 3,000 pieces of glass, opens up the front of the boxy building and nicely reflects images of nearby historic buildings.

**8 Turner Hall**, 1034 N. 4th St. (1882-83) Architect: Henry C. Koch. NR, ML, HPC. "A sound mind in a sound body" is the motto of the Turnverein, a German society that stressed scientific physical training, intellectual growth, and moral character. The Turner organization in Milwaukee was established in 1853 and is today one of the oldest continually operating Turner societies in the U.S. Their Victorian Gothic style clubhouse features a prominent tower and is accented by belt courses of dark red brick set into the local cream colored brick. This was the largest of the city's several Turner halls and is now the sole survivor.

**9 The Journal Company Building**, 333 W. State St. (1924) Architect: Frank D. Chase, Chicago, Arthur Weary, sculptor. The Milwaukee Sentinel Building, 918 N. 4th St. (1918) Architect: Alfred C. Clas. The state's largest newspaper, the Milwaukee Journal (founded 1882) and the city's

oldest paper, the Milwaukee Sentinel (founded 1837) are now located side by side, under common ownership but with separate editorial staffs and reporters. The Journal Co. building, sheathed in pink Kasota limestone, is embellished by a 350-ft. long carved frieze portraying the history of communication. Twenty "marks" of famous early printers appear above the third story windows.

**10 Milwaukee Auditorium**, 512 W. Kilbourn Ave. (1909) Architect: Ferry & Clas. Today's Auditorium occupies one of the public squares set aside by Byron Kilbourn in 1835. Green markets and a skating rink were located here early on, followed by the Exposition Building (1881-1905). The present Classical Revival style building took over the latter's function as an exhibition hall and concert auditorium and has been in continuous use since its opening day. The Auditorium is today supplemented by the Milwaukee Exposition and Convention Center and Arena (MECCA) which includes the Arena (1949) and the large convention hall across the street (1974).

**11 Milwaukee County Courthouse**, 901 N. 9th St. (1929-1931) Architect: Albert Randolph Ross, New York. NR. Sited on a commanding hill in downtown Milwaukee, the county's third courthouse was built as the centerpiece of an ambitious civic center scheme devised by local architect Alfred Clas in 1909. Emulating City Beautiful ideals, a grand boulevard, lined with civic and cultural buildings, was to link the new Courthouse with City Hall, but the plan was only partially realized. The

attic story frieze features stylized owls and helps to relieve the monumental and austere Neoclassical Revival exterior.

**12 Milwaukee Public Museum**, 800 W. Wells St. (1962-1963) Architect: Eschweiler, Eschweiler & Sietloff. The natural history collection of German-born educator Peter Engelmann formed the basis of the Milwaukee Public Museum which formally opened in 1884. Staff taxidermist-artist Carl Akely revolutionized the display of museum objects throughout the world when he created his muskrat diorama in 1889. Innovation in display has been a feature of the museum ever since. The present facility opened in 1963. The windowless, limestone-clad exterior is ornamented by a bronze sculpture of a Native American and flying geese, designed by Michigan sculptor Marshall Frederick.

**13 Wisconsin Club**, 900 W. Wisconsin Ave. (1848). Alterations by Edward Townsend Mix (1871, 1876). This opulent clubhouse was once the much-admired mansion of Alexander Mitchell, reputed to be 19th century Wisconsin's richest man. His interests encompassed banking, insurance and railroads. Mitchell's original residence was elegantly remodeled into a lavish French Second Empire style mansion complete with mansard roof, tower and bay windows in the 1870s. Mitchell also had the unique summer house, a wonderful confection of wooden scrollsawn gingerbread, built at the same time. Since April of 1896, the Wisconsin Club has occupied the mansion.

**14 Calvary Presbyterian Church**, 935 W. Wisconsin Ave. (1870) Architect: Koch & Hess. NR. Milwaukee's third Presbyterian congregation was established in 1869 to serve worshippers who lived west of the Milwaukee River. The present Victorian Gothic style church was built in 1870, and its size and opulence were a testament to the affluence of the fledgling congregation, whose members were drawn from the city's Yankee elite. Questions over the strength and stability of the steep west tower were laid to rest when a team of horses, hitched to the tower, failed to topple the spire. Red paint now covers the original cream color brick.

**15 St. James Episcopal Church**, 833 W. Wisconsin Ave. (1867-68) Architect: Gordon William Lloyd, Detroit. NR, ML, HPC. This offshoot of pioneer St. Paul's Episcopal Church was founded in 1850 to minister to the needs of west side residents. The present Gothic Revival structure, said to be the city's first stone church, was completed on St. James Day, 1868, and the tower was finished in 1871. Gutted by fire in 1872, the church was rebuilt and reopened in 1874. The city's oldest extant Episcopal church was built on the site of an old cemetery, and old graves are still found periodically during construction work.

**16 Milwaukee Central Library**, 814 W. Wisconsin Ave. (1895-98) Architect: Ferry & Clas. NR, ML, HPC. Milwaukee's public library officially began in 1878 when thousands of volumes were donated for public use by the Young Men's Literary Association, a library club dating back to 1848. The library moved from its old home at 4th St. and Wisconsin Ave. into the present building in 1898 and shared the premises with the Public Museum. The beautiful Beaux Arts style structure is one of Ferry & Clas's best public buildings. The magnificent entrance rotunda, with its marble staircases, mosaic floor and chandeliers, should not be missed.

**17 Mariner Tower / Wisconsin Tower**, 606 W. Wisconsin Ave. (1929-30) Architect: Weary & Alford, Chicago. Originally named after its builder, real estate developer John Mariner who died in 1930, the 22-story Wisconsin Tower still dominates Kilbourn town. The Moderne style skyscraper incorporates setback upper stories, polished granite, ornamental Art Deco grilles with peacocks, and entrance carvings which set off the otherwise monochromatic and rather severe stone-sheathed exterior.

**18 Schroeder Hotel / Marc Plaza**, 509 W. Wisconsin Ave. (1928) Architect: Holabird & Roche, Chicago. Milwaukee's largest hotel was the last major hotel built before the onset of the Great Depression and was featured in the Architectural Record of October, 1928. Milwaukeean Walter Schroeder built the 25-story, 550-room structure as the flagship of his statewide chain of hotels. Low relief Art Deco style ornament graces the exterior and includes stylized peacock and floral designs and stylized female figures. The hotel's current name dates to 1972, when local entrepreneur Ben Marcus purchased the property.